

JOINT
PUBLIC NOTICE

CHARLESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
69A Hagood Avenue
Charleston, South Carolina 29403-5107

and

THE S.C. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL
Office of Environmental Quality Control
Water Quality Certification and Wetlands Programs Section
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

REGULATORY DIVISION
Refer to: P/N #2003-1U-324-W

24 October 2003

Pursuant to Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1341), an application has been submitted to the Department of the Army and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
POST OFFICE BOX 191
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29202-0191

for a permit to place fill material in Early Branch of the

COOSAWHATCHIE RIVER

at a location of the southwest side of the existing S.C. Route 68, immediately northwest of the town of Yemassee, Hampton County, South Carolina (Latitude 32.7446 N; Longitude 80.9279 W).

In order to give all interested parties an opportunity to express their views

NOTICE

is hereby given that written statements regarding the proposed work will be received by both of the above mentioned offices until

12 O'CLOCK NOON, MONDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2003

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed work.

The proposed work consists of the widening of the existing S.C. Route 68. In detail, the proposed project requires impacts to a total of 5.28 acres of wetlands, including filling 4.77 acres and clearing 0.51 acres. Proposed mitigation includes debiting the South Carolina Department of Transportation Black River Mitigation Bank at a prescribed ratio of 4:1. The project purpose, as stated by the applicant, is to provide transportation system connectivity along S.C. Route 68, correct existing roadway deficiencies, and accommodate future traffic volumes.

NOTE: Plans depicting the work described in this notice are available and will be provided, upon receipt of a written request, to anyone that is interested in obtaining a copy of the plans for the specific project. The request must identify the project of interest by public notice number and a self-addressed stamped

24 October 2003

envelope must also be provided for mailing the drawings to you. Your request for drawings should be addressed to the

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: REGULATORY DIVISION
69A Hagood Avenue
Charleston, South Carolina 29403-5107**

The District Engineer has concluded that the discharges associated with this project, both direct and indirect, should be reviewed by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control in accordance with provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. As such, this notice constitutes a request, on behalf of the applicant, for certification that this project will comply with applicable effluent limitations and water quality standards. The District Engineer will not process this application to a conclusion until such certification is received. The applicant is hereby advised that supplemental information may be required by the State to facilitate the review. Persons wishing to comment or object to Water Quality Certification must submit all comments in writing to the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control at the above address within thirty (30) days of the date of this notice.

This notice initiates the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Implementation of the proposed project would impact 5.28 acres of estuarine substrates and emergent wetlands utilized by various life stages of species comprising the red drum, shrimp, and snapper-grouper management complexes. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial individual or cumulative adverse impact on EFH or fisheries managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the NMFS.

The District Engineer has consulted the most recently available information and has determined that the project will have no effect on any Federally endangered, threatened, or proposed species and will not result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated or proposed critical habitat. This public notice serves as a request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for any additional information they may have on whether any listed or proposed endangered or threatened species or designated or proposed critical habitat may be present in the area which would be affected by the activity, pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended).

The District Engineer has consulted the latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places for the presence or absence of registered properties, or properties listed as being eligible for inclusion therein, and this worksite is not included as a registered property or property listed as being eligible for inclusion in the Register. Consultation of the National Register constitutes the extent of cultural resource investigations by the District Engineer, and he is otherwise unaware of the presence of such resources. Presently unknown archaeological, scientific, prehistorical, or historical data may be lost or destroyed by the work to be accomplished under the requested permit.

Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for a public hearing shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the activity on the public interest and will include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act and, as appropriate, the criteria established under authority of Section 102 of the Marine Protection,

24 October 2003

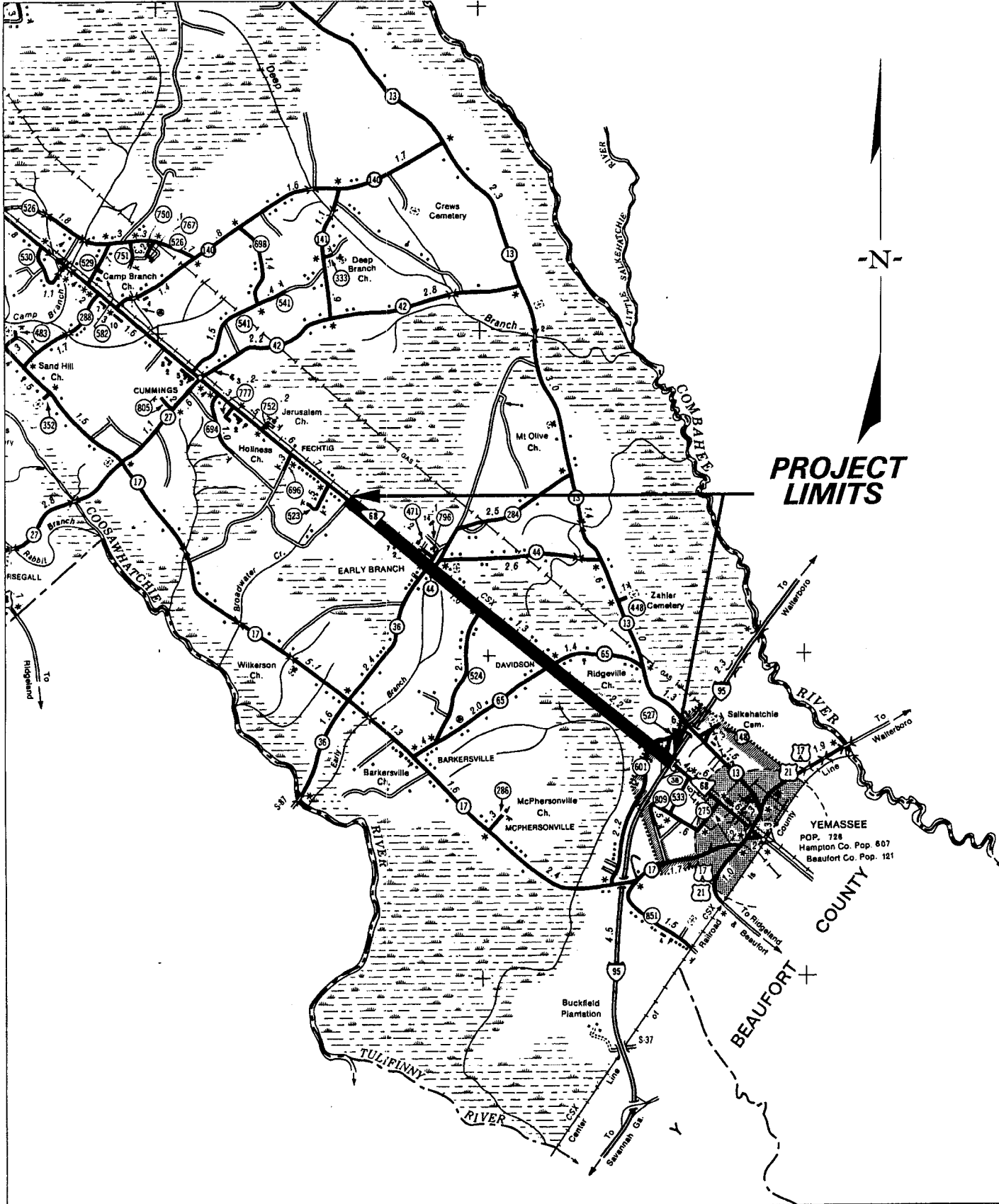
Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, as amended. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the project must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the project will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. A permit will be granted unless the District Engineer determines that it would be contrary to the public interest. In cases of conflicting property rights, the Corps of Engineers cannot undertake to adjudicate rival claims.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this project. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the activity.

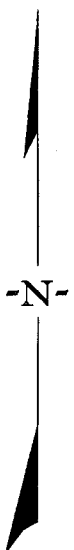
If there are any questions concerning this public notice, please contact me at 843-329-8044 or toll free at 1-866-329-8187.



Tracy Hurst
Project Manager
Regulatory Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



**PROJECT
LIMITS**



Shaded Area Indicates
County Location in SC

Figure 1 P/N # 2003-IV-324

A Section of the Hampton County Highway Map Showing
the Location of the Project Area





The project area is located in Hampton County, SC, a primarily rural county with a population of 21,386 people, according to 2000 Census data. The majority of the corridor is rural consisting primarily of sparse, single-family residences and undeveloped land, with a small commercial area near the I-95 interchange and a Regional Industrial Park at the western project terminus, toward the town of Varnville. The CSX Railroad borders SC Route 68 to the northeast throughout the project corridor.

SC Route 68 is presently a two-lane ditch facility with one 12-foot travel lane in each direction and earthen shoulders. The existing total right of way width varies from 50 to 75 feet, with 25 to 37.5 feet on each side of the centerline. The posted speed limit on SC Route 68 varies from 45 miles per hour (mph) to 55 mph. Of the present (2000) traffic volume of 3,800 vehicles per day, approximately 7% of the vehicles are heavy trucks and 3% are medium trucks.

SC Route 68 serves as a primary connection from Interstate 95 to the towns of Varnville (population ~2,000), Hampton (population ~3,000), and Brunson (population ~600), as well as to several smaller rural communities (Early Branch, Cummings, etc). SC Route 68 is also designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route.

The proposed widening of SC Route 68 will involve the construction of a four-lane divided highway, consisting of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction with a 48-foot earthen median and earthen shoulders. The new construction for the four-lane divided section will occur on the southwestern side of the roadway, due to the railroad tracks adjacent to the SC Route 68 to the northeast. Total right of way required for the widening is approximately 150 feet. Improving sight distances, turning radii and adding turn lanes at intersections will also be included in the project to enhance safety; off-set intersections may also be reconfigured. The posted speed limit will remain 45 to 55 mph.

The Department has considered location and design alternatives in the process of developing the currently proposed "build" alternative. The "no-build" alternative, which consists of the Department making no improvements, was considered as a baseline for comparison; however, the "no-build" alternative would not increase the capacity or efficiency of the roadway or meet the project's purpose of stimulating the region's economy through growth and development; therefore, this alternative is not considered acceptable. Widening the existing facility on essentially the same alignment by adding a pair of parallel travel lanes was the safest, most practicable and least environmentally damaging alternative. Widening to the northeast was not practicable due the proximity of the railway; therefore, the Department has proposed to add a pair of travel lanes parallel to, and southwest of the existing facility.

Regarding the proposed median widths, the Department is currently in the process of retrofitting numerous divided roadways with cable median barriers. Accordingly, it is the Department's procedure to design new and improved roadway facilities with median widths that are sufficiently wide to meet current departments design standards for safety.

PROJECT TITLE: PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING - SC RTE 68
APPLICANT: SCDOT
LOCATION: HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003
FILE: P/N #3003-1U-324

The diagram is a cross-section of a road project, labeled 'SECTION A-A'. The vertical axis on the left is labeled 'ELEVATION' and ranges from 30 to 45 feet. The horizontal axis at the bottom shows stationing from 140 to 0 to 140. A dashed line represents the 'EXISTING GRADE', and a solid line represents the 'FINISHED GRADE'. The finished grade includes a 4% slope on the left and a 4% slope on the right. A 'WETLAND AREA IMPACT' is indicated by a horizontal double-headed arrow between station 32+00 and station 120+00. Elevation points are marked: 307 at station 40, 3572 at station 0, 3572 at station 80, and 2980 at station 120. A 'EXIST. GROUND LINE' is shown on the right. A scale bar at the bottom left indicates 0 to 40 feet for both vertical and horizontal dimensions. A box on the right contains project information.

TYPICAL SECTION

SECTION A-A

ELEVATION

EXISTING GRADE

FINISHED GRADE

WETLAND AREA IMPACT

EXIST. GROUND LINE

1337+00.00

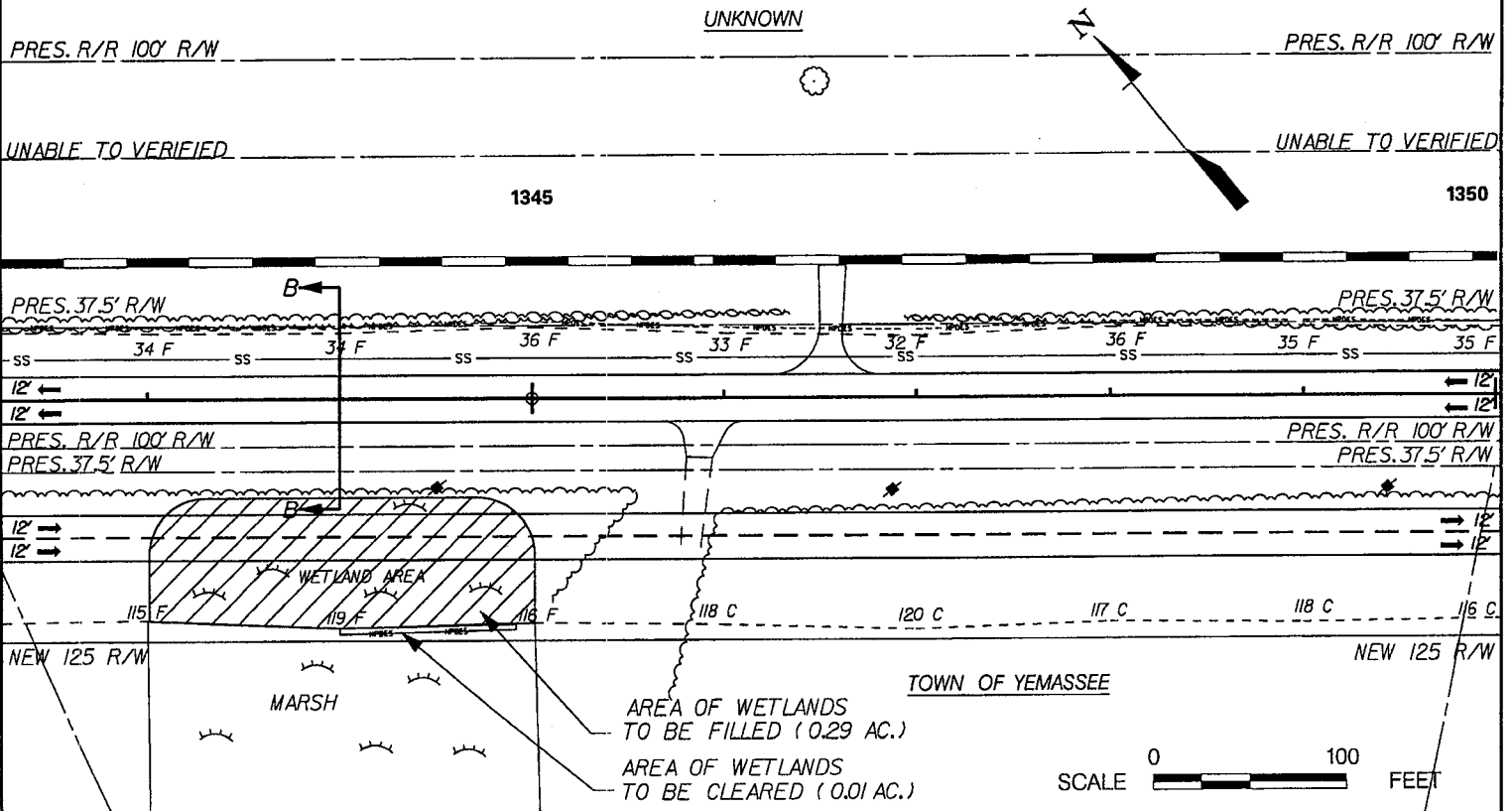
140 120 100 80 60 40 20 0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140

VERT. 0 20
HORIZ. 0 40
SCALE FEET

P/N # 2003-10-324

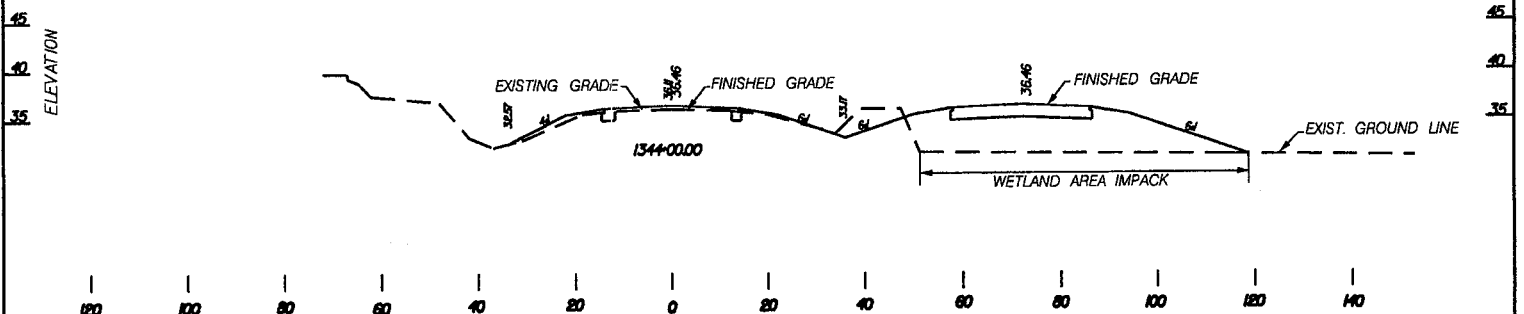
PIN 24432
PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING
S.C. RTE. 68
ISOLATED WETLANDS
HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
APPLICATION BY SCDOT
FEDERAL FUNDS TO BE USED
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003
SHEET 2 OF 7

PLAN



TYPICAL SECTION

SECTION B-B



VERT. 0 20
HORIZ. 0 40
SCALE FEET

P/N # 2003-10-324

PIN 24432

PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING

S.C. RTE. 68

ISOLATED WETLANDS

HAMPTON COUNTY, SC

APPLICATION BY SCDOT

FEDERAL FUNDS TO BE USED

DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003

SHEET 3 OF 7

PLAN

PRES. R/R 100' R/W

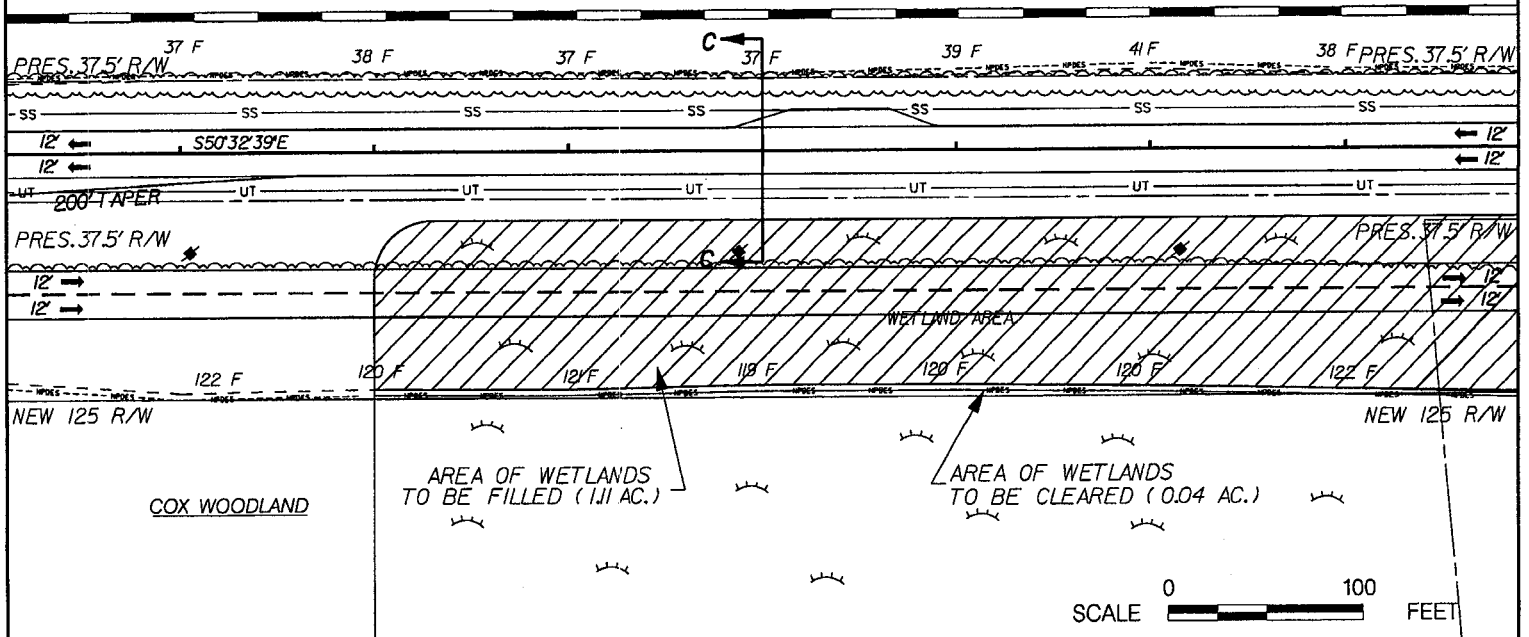
UNKNOWN

PRES. R/R 100 R/W

UNABLE TO VERIFIED

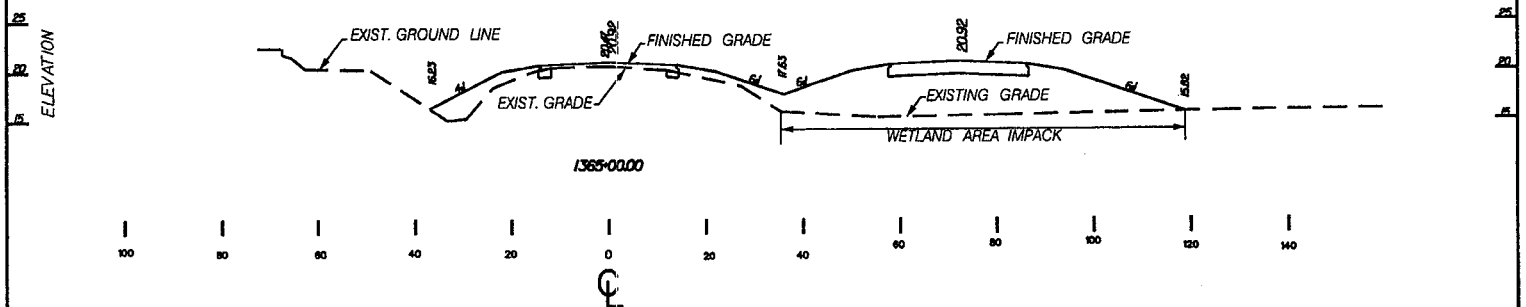
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1365



TYPICAL SECTION

SECTION C-C



VERT. 0 20
HORIZ. 0 40
SCALE  FEET

P/N # 2003-IV- 324

PIN 24432
PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING
S.C. RTE. 68
ISOLATED WETLANDS
HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
APPLICATION BY SCDOT
FEDERAL FUNDS TO BE USED
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003
SHEET 4 OF 7

PLAN

PRES. R/R 100' R/W

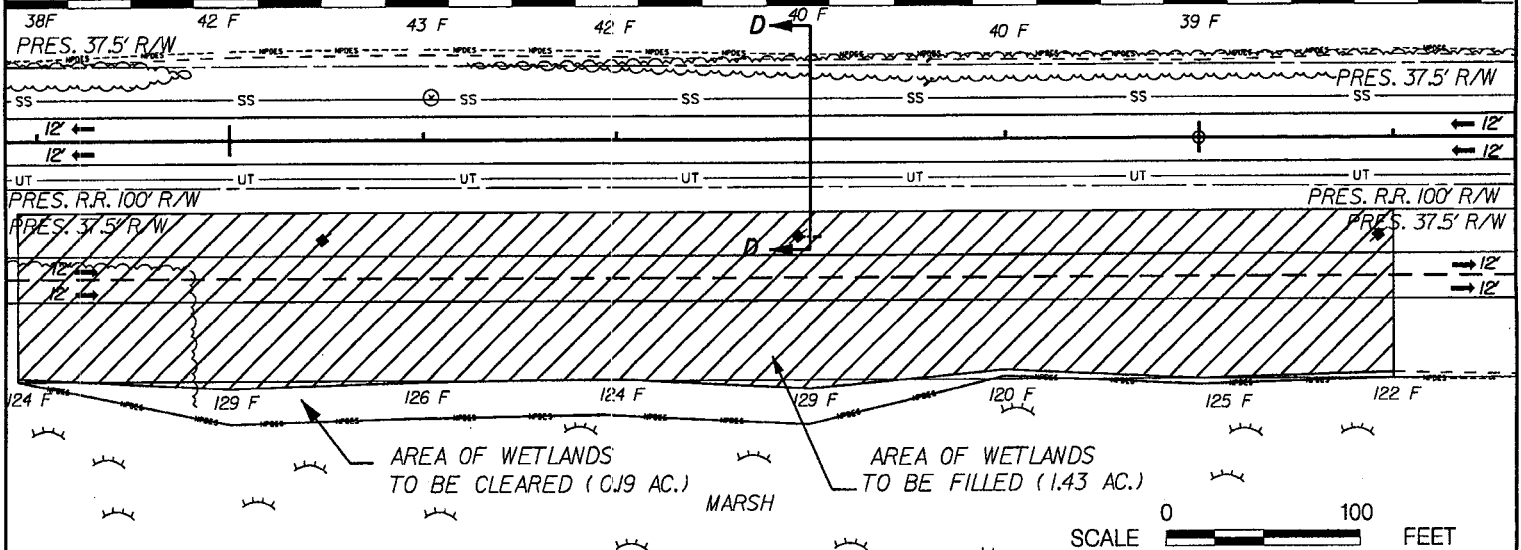
PRES. R/R 100' R/W

UNABLE TO VERIFIED

UNABLE TO VERIFIED

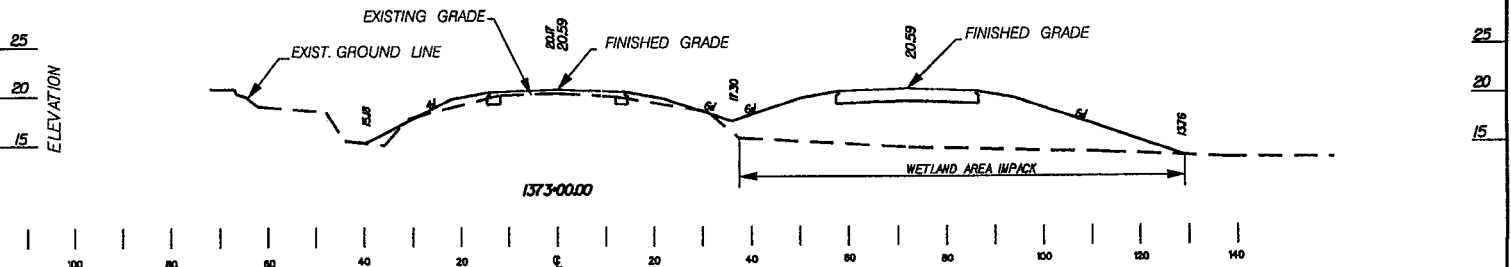
1370

1375



TYPICAL SECTION

SECTION D-D



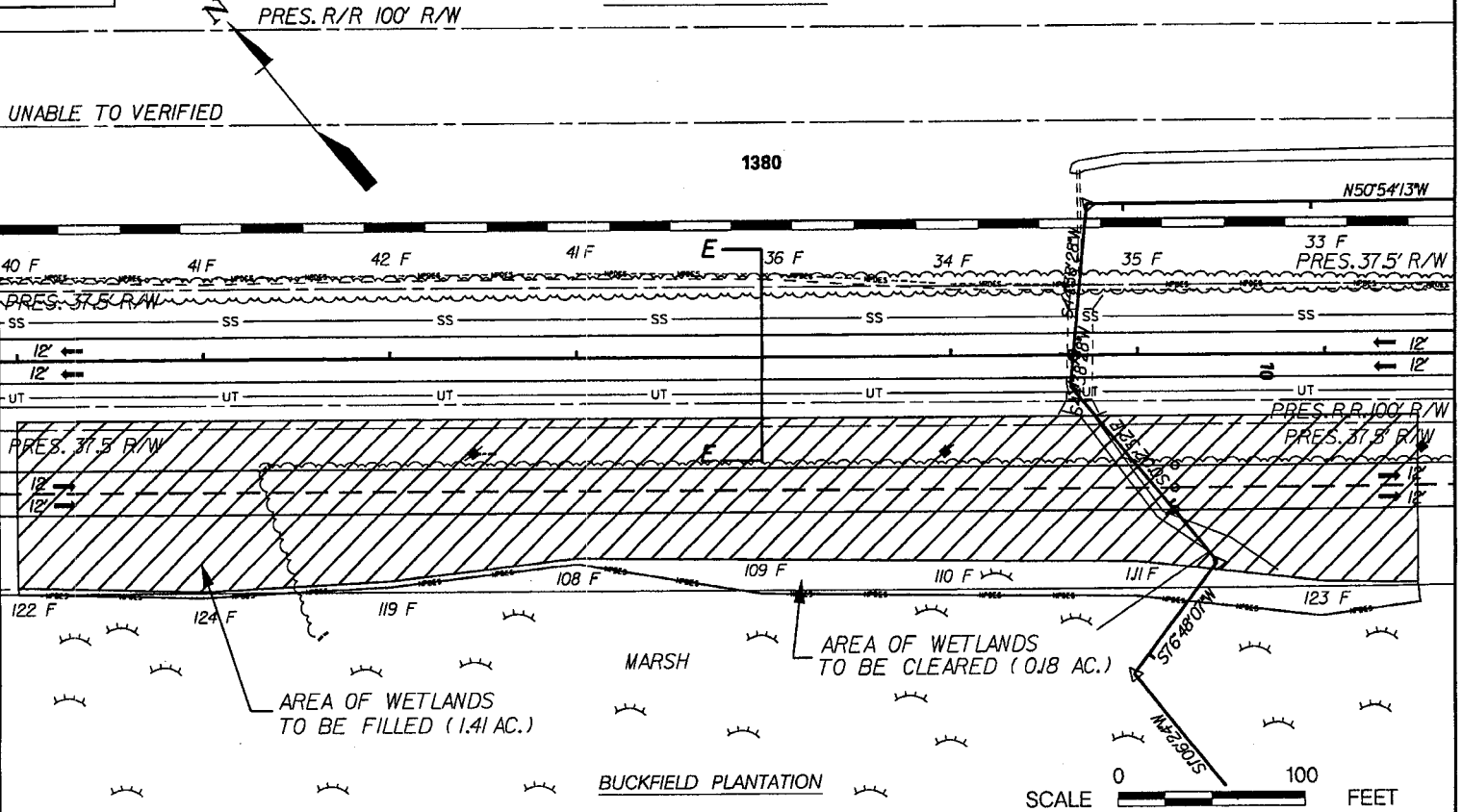
P/W # 2003-10-324

PIN 24432
PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING
S.C. RTE. 68
ISOLATED WETLANDS
HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
APPLICATION BY SCDOT
FEDERAL FUNDS TO BE USED
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003
SHEET 5 OF 7

VERT. 0 20
HORIZ. 0 40
SCALE 0 40 FEET

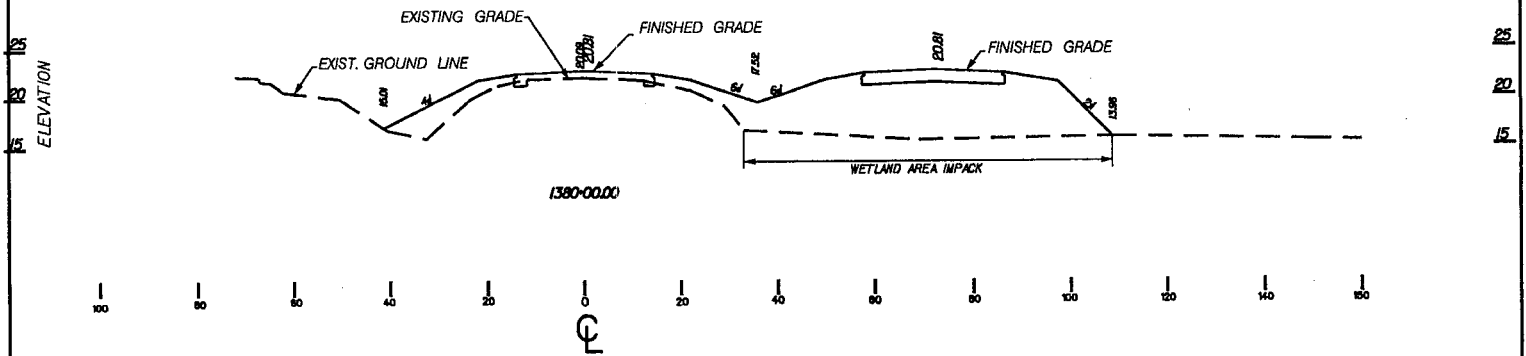
PLAN

BUCKFIELD PLANTATION



TYPICAL SECTION

SECTION E-E



PIN # 2003-IV-324

PIN 24432
PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING
S.C. RTE. 68
ISOLATED WETLANDS
HAMPTON COUNTY, SC
APPLICATION BY SCDOT
FEDERAL FUNDS TO BE USED
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003
SHEET 6 OF 7

VERT. 0 20
HORIZ. 0 40
SCALE 0 20 40 60 FEET

PERMIT NOTES

- 1) 5.28 acres of wetlands will be impacted which includes 4.77 acres of fill in waters of the U.S. and 0.51 acres of clearing.
- 2) Erosion and sediment control measures will be implemented in accordance with Section 107.26 of the South Carolina Department of Transportation's Standard Specifications.
- 3) Fill material meeting AASHTO Specifications M-57-80 will be obtained from high ground and placed using mechanized equipment.
- 4) Excavated material will be disposed of on high ground.
- 5) Mitigation will consist of debiting the Black River Basin Mitigation Bank at the prescribed ratio of 4:1.
- 6) The names and addresses of adjacent property owners are as follows:

Cox Woodland Co.
P.O. Box 1647
Augusta, Ga 30903

Town of Yemassee
P.O. Box 577
Yemassee, S.C. 29945

Mr. George G. Peebles
1344 Ridgecut Road
Early Branch, S.C. 29116

PIN 24432 *P/W # 2003-10-324*
PROPOSED ROAD WIDENING
S.C. ROUTE 68
HAMPTON COUNTY,
S. C. APPLICATION BY SCDOT
FEDERAL FUNDS TO BE USED
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003
SHEET 7 OF 7